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STRANGERS.

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CAMPBELL.



Strangers:

A LITTLE BOOK OF POEMS.

BY

MARY J. CAMPBELL.



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*“Read from some humble poet,
Whose songs gushed from his heart,
As showers from the clouds of summer,
Or tears from the eyelids start.
“Who, through long days of labor,
And nights devoid of ease,
Still heard in his soul the music
Of wonderful melodies.”*

—Longfellow.



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NATURE'S SONG,

A sweet songster came, and over my head
Sang me a song, though just what he said
To my poor stupid ears was not wholly plain,
But my heart knew the language and joined the refrain.

I sought out the rose in its glorious bloom,
Bathed my lips in its dew, and breathed its perfume :
It touched the same chord, and seemed like a part
Of the song of the bird that was still in my heart.

The brooklet went dancing away to the sea,
With the hint of a song in its soft rippling glee,
Then onward went I, and alone on the strand
Heard the mingling of waters in symphony grand.

Then the voices of children came out on the air,
Singing "Glory to God" in melody rare ;
I joined in their song, and found it the key
To the music of bird, the brook, and the sea.

DESOLATE.

O my wood-girted home, moss covered and grey,
Where swiftly my childhood passed away;
The fields of daisies where we used to roam,
The tinkle of bells when the cows came home.

Youth's bright days, and youth's bright dreams—
Springtime buds and babbling streams,
The robin's song, and the plaintive trill
In the twilight notes of the whippoor-will.

The summer's heat, and cooling shade
The apple trees in the orchard made;
The scent of the clover the scythe laid low,
The hum of the bees in their flight to and fro.

Gone is the hearthstone, and gone are they
Who made the woods ring with laughter and play,
But the sparrow comes and builds her nest
At the old door rock and none molest.

In the fields where daisies once were found
Wild growing herbs and weeds abound,

And the thistle and the mullein grow
Where the silent dead are sleeping low.

O youth's bright days, and youth's bright dreams—
Gone from my heart like sunset beams
That glimmer and glimmer 'till not a ray
Gladden the hills in the twilight gray.

DETHRONED.

It seems but yesterday, the bloom,
And now the yellow leaf is seen,
And Nature's pencil writes the doom
Of beauteous summer, royal queen.

The birds of June have taken flight,
Or changed their notes so sweet and clear,
And swallows, from their circling height
Proclaim departure near.

Unvarying is the locust song,
And chirping crickets never tire;
The golden rod the pastures throng,
With sumac decked with cones of fire.

And daily care and daily task
Infringe upon the setting sun,
While stars peep through their somber mask
Ere toil is done.

Although dethroned, supremely stands
Sweet summer's reign without a peer,
With lifted hearts and lifted hands,
We bless thee, queen of many a year.

LINES.

WRITTEN THE BURIAL DAY OF THE POET WHITTIER.

Softly chime four score and four,
O solemn bell;
A glorious soul, captive no more,
'Tis well, 'tis well !

Sweetly ring a sad refrain,
Echoing bell ;
An earthly loss with heavenly gain
Calls not a knell.

His matchless worth your tones inspire,
O praiseful bell ;
Go chant his psalms, ye tuneful choir,
And let them tell.

His sun is set, the afterglow
Is on the hill and dell,
And yet it shines, by faith we know ;
Ring, ring the bell !

HYMN.

“ THE SHADOW OF A GREAT ROCK IN A WEARY LAND.”

Through the desert I wandered, weary was I,
Scorching the sun, and brazen the sky,
Bleeding my feet, in my anguish I cried :
“ Where is my refuge, O where shall I hide !”

Through the hot drifting sand, through the hot stifling air,
O'er the desert's dim distance blindly I stare,
When lo, I behold, and with rapture I cry :
“ 'Tis the Rock, 'tis the Rock, that is higher than I !”

Wonderful Rock in thy shadow so blest,
Fainting I fall—my refuge, my rest!—
Hide me and shield me—My soul makes demand—
O mighty the Rock, O weary the land!

AUTUMN.

What say the leaves as the breezes go by,
And they tremble and quiver all day;
With faces upturned to the beautiful sky,
They whisper, “We are going away.”

What say the flowers to the fleecy clouds,
As they bend and gracefully sway ;
“We are thinking of winter, and snowy shrouds—
Alas! we are going away.”

I gazed at the fields of yellow grain,
They softly sighed and seemed to say,
"We are weary of sunshine, and weary of rain,
And long for the reapers to take us away."

There comes to my ears a sad sweet strain,
Like forgotten music of long ago;
Is it the leaves and flowers and bending grain,
Chanting their requiem low?

Or is it the sound of a distant bell,
Beyond the hills and the haze,
The locust's song, the wind's soft swell,
Or the cricket's chirp in the maize?

It speaks to my heart in a language plain,
I hear it each sad, sweet day,
"Like the leaves and the flowers and ripened grain,
You, too, are going away."

DARE.

"Dare to do right, dare to be true,"
God's name is Truth, it must prevail;
God's name is Right, with Him in view,
We cannot fail.

WRONG WEIGHT.

Justice, fair lady, look out for your scales,
Your weight is extremely odd,
A dime will tip where merit fails,
And dollars weigh more than God.

O Justice, your scales you must repair,
An ounce of gold brings them low to the ground,
While the earth's weight of woe, its grief and despair,
Goes up in the air with a bound.

The scales for the million must be righteous and true,
Or forever laid by on the shelf,
And every man must have his just due,
Or weigh he will for himself.

IN AN OLD CEMETERY.

Down toward his crimsoned curtained bed
The summer sun was creeping,
Alone, I sought the ancient dead,
Who peacefully were sleeping.

There is a greater charm to me,
The wondrous chiseled diction
That on the moss-grown slab we see,
Than reading modern fiction.

And o'er these sleepers, side by side,
Quaint thoughts in prose and rhyme,
Of those who lived, and loved, and died,
In olden time.

One was lying "Dust to dust,"
Another was not there ;
Some left a word of precious trust,
Another left despair.

And some in dreadful emblem told
Of death's dark night,
And some did cherub's wings unfold
For heavenly flight.

Some told of "mansions in the skies."
And some the grave's dark prison,
Some at the last day would arise,
Some had already risen.

Some went home at eventide,
And some at life's bright morn ;
And some had breathed and looked, then died
At early dawn,

And thus I wandered, 'round and 'round,
Inscriptions strange to scan,
Moss-hidden near the earth I found,
"Here lies an honest man."

Where he had gone there was no trace,
Nor word of praise above his sod ;
He needed none, all knew his place
Was with his God.

THE HUNCHBACK'S WELL.*

FOUNDED ON A TRUE INCIDENT.

Near the country road stretching away
Through the fields, by boulders gray,
Toiled the hunchback, bowed to the earth
By the weight on his shoulders, borne from birth.
“ What seek ye my friend ? ” said a passer by.
“ Digging for love,” was the quaint reply.
“ Digging for love ! O the love that is hid
’Neath the sod and coffin-lid ;
All that was mine in the earth is laid,
But it cannot come forth by the pick or spade.”
And with tearful eyes he went toward the town,
But the hunchback toiled ’till the sun went down.
“ Digging for love,” he sadly said,
“ Denied to the living will come to the dead.”
And he daily toiled with feeble strength,
’Till living water he reached at length.
Then up to the surface with power and skill,
It gurgled and rippled, a constant rill.
Then the shovel and pick were laid away,
And with pain he weakened each coming day.

*Nearing the end of life, and wishing to leave behind a work of love whereby his name might be remembered, a man, with misshapen body, but warm heart, dug a well by the roadside, where might come all creatures to quench their thirst.

When he heard strange waters, unheard before,
And theplash of a boat, and dip of an oar,
And with the silent boatman he crossed the tide,
And hailed with joy the other side.

Through the glare of the noon and heat of the day
A jaded traveller wended his way.

When the murmur of water on his glad ear burst,
And he cooled his brow and quenched his thirst;

And with grateful heart a blessing he gave
To the memory of him asleep in his grave.

And the toiling ox and gentle kine
Hasten to drink the draught divine,

And with dripping mouths look far away.
Their silent thoughts we may not say,

But those who speak, with praises tell
The cooling power of the hunchback's well.

O mighty power the heart to move
Is the silent hand that digged for love.

AT THE GRAVE OF A POET.

O poet soul, couldst thou but shed
From thy great light the smallest gleam,
A ray upon the path we tread,
Something of heaven, not a dream.

Tell us of glory thou hast seen—
The crystal sea, its ebb and flow,
The fields of everlasting green,
And soft-toned zephyrs whispering low.

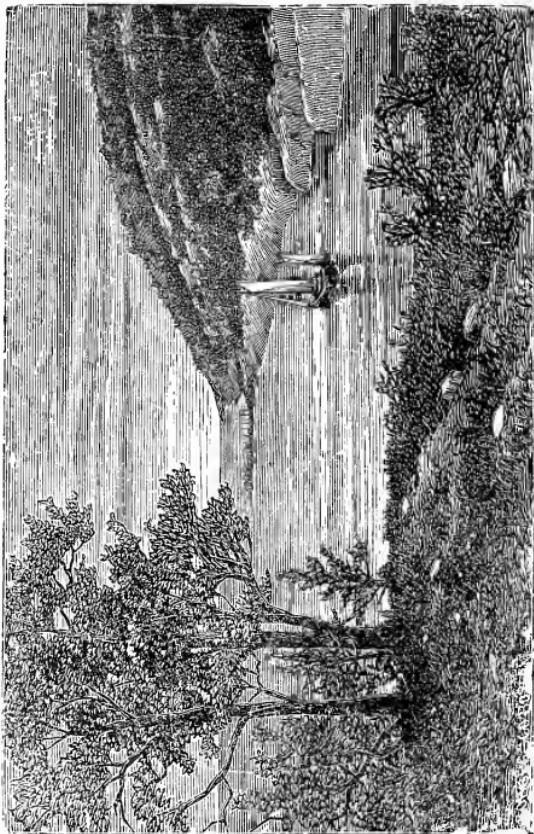
Of fleecy clouds 'neath heaven's blue,
Like some remembered day of earth ;
We would not ask a better hue,
Or crave a single planet's birth.

Tell of a hand clasped in thine own,
Not cold like that ye laid away,
But throbbing and warm, like one well known
To thee in youth's bright day.

Tell us of love's eternal deep,
Unmixed with blight, unmixed with pain ;
Tell us that those who fell asleep
Have wakened to immortal reign.

WATCHING THE SNOW.

Beautiful snow, falling tonight,
So tenderly falling, pure and white,
Mingling with curls of golden hair,
Kissing the furrowed brow of care,
Covering the earth in its frosty blight,
Tenderly hiding the graves tonight.



“THE GOLD OF THE SUNLIGHT, THE BLUE OF THE SKY.”

Beautiful snow, O beautiful snow,
Falling from heaven, alighting so low,
Hiding the frost-bitten earth from sight,
Giving it glory in a mantle of white;
Your falling from heaven alighting so low,
Gives me a hope, O beautiful snow.

This is my hope, O beautiful snow:
That heaven's own grace alighting so low,
May gently enfold me, hiding the blight
Of sin and of time, like a mantle of white,
Wrapping the graves of the dead, sleeping low,
Hiding mine own, O beautiful snow.

PRICELESS.

There are glorious things that money can't buy—
The gold of the sunlight, the blue of the sky,
The scent of the violets borne on the breeze,
The song of the birds in the whispering trees.

There are wonderful things that money can't buy—
The ocean's wild music when the tide rages high,
The track of the moonlight stretched over its face,
The swell of the waves and their billowy grace.

There are precious things that money can't buy—
The toil purchased rest when evening is nigh,
The home of contentment where peace reigns serene,
A heart that is pure, and a conscience that's clean.

A PARODY.

"THE OLD MOTHER HUBBARD."

How dear to my heart is the cool summer twilight,
When the last scorching sunbeam is hidden from view,
O'er the long winding stairway, up, up to the skylight,
My weary feet hasten when toiling is through.
The low narrow bedstead and table beside it,
The white-curtained window looking out on the vale,
The old-fashioned armchair well cushioned to hide it;
And the old Mother Hubbard that hangs on the nail.
The old Mother Hubbard, the clean Mother Hubbard,
The cool Mother Hubbard, that hangs on the nail.

That old Mother Hubbard, I hail as a treasure!
When careworn and weary it often has healed,
By giving me comfort and rest without measure,
That costliest satins and silks cannot yield.
Sometimes on a Sabbath I feel it my duty
To torture the body and let fashion prevail,
But e'en through the sermon I see in its beauty
The old Mother Hubbard that hangs on the nail.
The old Mother Hubbard, the clean Mother Hubbard,
The cool Mother Hubbard that hangs on the nail.

With quick eager hands I reach forth to receive it,
When close-fitting garments are laid by with care,
Not a full evening costume could tempt me to leave it,
Though covered with jewels a princess might wear.

Wherever I wander, in whatever station,
In tears I'll regret and with sorrow bewail,
Should frivolous fashion despoil the creation
Of the old Mother Hubbard that hangs on the nail.
The old Mother Hubbard, the clean Mother Hubbard,
The cool Mother Hubbard that hangs on the nail.

MY LOVE 'S AWAY.

O where the birds that yestermorn
With glorious music filled the air,
That in my heart sweet thoughts were born,
Sweet thoughts divinely rare.

The rose we sought at eventide,
And found in beauty wet with dew,
Was placed my blushing cheek beside
To test its matchless hue.

When in the east the moon's sweet face
Looked upward towards her heavenly stair,
My head was hid in love's embrace.
O rest and bliss I found thee there.

* * *

O songless birds, O scentless flowers.
O pale-faced moon how sad thy ray,
O dreary heart and weary hours,
My love 's away—my love 's away!

Sun of my soul, come back, come back !
Disperse the clouds from love-lit skies ;
Let magic speed thy homeward track,
Ere nature's sweetness droops and dies.

EASTER.

O Risen Lord, we pray
That Thou upon this day
Will roll away the stone,
And from the heart's cold tomb,
May living love and pity come,
Tender as Thine own.

Thy truth, O Christ, is crucified,
And from its hands, its feet, its side,
The life-blood flows.
'Tis mocked, scorned with fiercest scorn,
Its brow is pierced with many a thorn,
By angry foes.

O risen Lord, this glorious day
Bid truth arise, and may it sway
The human heart with love ;
May glorious truth forever roll,
Till nations know its sweet control
As Thine is known above.

CELESTIAL COMFORTERS.

Before the dawn when sleep is gone,
Out from my windows I can see,
The glowing lights through heavenly heights
That seem to say to me—

Up here, up here you need not fear,
There 's room for everyone
That 's lived and died and wept and sighed
Under the glorious sun.

That we are here, is very clear,
How happened it, you do not know,
Neither do we, and yet you see
Our bright eternal glow.

The same great cause that made the laws
That holds us shining here,
Will be as true to guide you through
To your eternal sphere.

Just how or when you need not ken,
But keep the end in view,
The road is made, the track is laid,
And perfect through and through.

And should a jar the journey mar,
Just trust the engineer,
To him it 's plain—he runs the train
O'er mount and desert drear.

“AND THERE WAS NO MORE SEA.”

Shall there be no more sea, with its murmuring roll,
When the powers of sin no longer control ?
When the lion and lamb in love shall agree,
Will we listen in vain for the sound of the sea ?

I have visions of beauty and dreams of delight
In the brightness of morn and silence of night,
But in visions and dreams there cometh to me
A glimpse of the waves and the voice of the sea.

Full of rapture the thought that the darkness and night
Shall yield up their power to glory and light;
Still one tearful regret—can it be—can it be—
In the blissful hereafter there will be no more sea ?

Shall the sound of its music be heard nevermore
As its foam-crested billow embraces the shore ?
In creative wisdom, ah, what can there be
To excel in its beauty the wonderful sea !

Eternal—eternal—it murmurs it low,
Forever, and ever—in its ebb and its flow.
God of the waters, O how can it be,
That Thy glory aboundeth when hushed is the sea !

A LOVE DITTY.

Fair I imagine her parlor graced,
Love's message spread before her,
Begging an answer, sent in haste,
To one who did adore her.

Flushed were her cheeks, and in her eyes
Both smiles and tears were gleaming,
His words had filled her with surprise,
His passion never dreaming.

Said she, "I'll write the simple truth,
His ardor I must smother,
I have no love for this bold youth,
For him—or any other."

Then Cupid came, sly little god,
And perched upon her shoulder,
"The ways of love," quoth he, "are odd,"
And something sweet he told her.

She caught her pen, for through her heart
Went dancing love's great river,
Quick Cupid well had done his part,
With but a single quiver.

"O blessed hand," the lover cried,
"That penned this sweet effusion,
It gives to me a charming bride,
And love that 's no illusion."

LIFE.

Life is a bubble filled with sorrow and care,
All earthly ambition as empty as air;
To lay hold of a phantom we wearily chase,
Then a glimpse of the grave puts an end to the race.

A glimpse of the grave, O be not dismayed,
The whole earth is a grave awaiting the spade,
And millions unborn will sorrow and weep,
Then rest in her bosom and peacefully sleep.

She claims but her own, the dust and decay
Which has nothing of life when the soul flits away.
Look up from the damp and mould of the sod,
Look up, and behold the glory of God.

FLIGHT OF THE LEAVES.

Whirling, and flying, and drifting, are we,
Down in the valley, then high in the air,
On the the brink of the brook, at the roots of the trees
That once was our home, we hide in despair.

“We are seeking a shelter, it seems but a day
Since shelter we gave from the summer’s fierce heat,
And no longer needed we are driven away,
And trampled and crushed ‘neath hurrying feet.

“Then over the treetop, leafless and brown,
We catch at the limb that gave us our birth,
Then over the steeple and over the town,
‘Till trembling and weary, we fall to the earth.’

“Then down in a hollow we huddle and hide.

And dear Mother Earth, she bids us to stay,
When a bit of a whirlwind springs up at our side,
Then upward we circle, away and away.

“Whither away, O where shall we go?

We are seeking for rest so needful to age.”
Under the snow, deep under the snow,
The winds are unf feared and storms never rage.

CHRISTMAS.

Chime, chime, chime—glad Christmas time,
What does your rhyme
Say unto me;
Is it peace on earth, feasting and mirth,
A star and a birth,
Or the mistletoe tree?

Ring, ring, ring—what do you bring,
With thine echoing swing,
O Christmas bells!
Is it costly gifts, or the snow that drifts.
As it ruthlessly sifts
Where poverty dwells?

O what do ye say, as ye wildly sway
On this Christmas day,
With thine iron tongue?
Is it war and hate, that willingly mate,
And devils elate,
Or what the angels sung ?

Ring on, O bell, be it a knell,
Or joy ye tell,
This frosty morn.

One thing we know, a star's bright glow
Told man below,
Jesus was born.

THE CRAVING OF A THOUGHT.

There came to me a thought one day,
"This thought is mine," said I, "for aye."
This thought was constant in its cry,
"O give me freedom, or I die."

"Then die, 't were better thus," said I,
"Thou pigmy of deformity;
The giants own the right of way,
Where such as thee can never stray."

"But I will go," my poor thought cried,
"God gave me birth, I will not hide.
Suppose thou, if I chance to stray
Where mighty giants own the way,

"That they, from such a towering height,
If on a dwarf should rest their sight,
Would crush him with their dreadful ire,
Because he made them seem the higher?"

"Thou reasonest well," said I, "and so
Here is thy freedom, thou canst go
To seek thine own, or go instead
Where wondrous giants pat thy head."

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